

POTOMAC / GARRETT STATE FOREST

ANNUAL WORK PLAN

FISCAL YEAR 2018



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SFI-00050



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**Potomac- Garrett State Forest
FY-18 Annual Work Plan**

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I. State Forest Overview

The Potomac-Garrett State Forests situated in southwestern Garrett County in Western Maryland have the distinction of being the birthplace of forestry conservation in Maryland. The generous donation of 1,917 acres by the Garrett Brothers in 1906 not only serves as the foundation of the Garrett State Forest, but is the root of both Maryland's present Public Lands system and Forest Service. Mountain forests, streams and valleys make up the nearly 19,000 acres of this State Forest. The forest cover is predominantly a second growth mixed hardwood forest dominated by mixed oaks, sugar and red maples, black cherry, basswood, ash and birch. The geography of this area provides for a wide range of growing conditions from the harsh wind and ice swept ridge tops of Backbone Mountain to the deep rich slopes above the North Branch of the Potomac River. Much of the State Forestlands contain excellent quality hardwoods.

II. Annual Work Plan Summary

In addition to the routine operations and management of the State Forest, the FY-18 Annual Work Plan for Potomac-Garrett State Forest details three Special Management Projects and 15 Land Management Projects that will be the focus of the State Forest management staff for FY-18. All projects and proposals within this Plan have been developed to meet one or more of the Land Management Guidelines and Objectives as seen in the Potomac-Garrett State Forest Sustainable Forest Management Plan including:

Forest Economy: management activities with a purpose to maintain an economically sustainable forest and contribute to the local economy through providing forest-related employment and products

Forest Conservation: management activities with a purpose to protect significant or unique natural communities and elements of biological diversity, including Ecologically Significant Areas, High Conservation Value Forests and Old Growth Forests. Old Growth forest management serves to restore and/or enhance old growth forest structure and function.

Water Quality : management activities designed to protect or improve ecological functions in protecting or enhancing water quality.

Wildlife Habitat: management activities with a purpose to maintain and enhance the ecological needs of the diversity of wildlife species and habitat types.

Recreation and Cultural Heritage: management activities with a purpose to maintain and enhance areas that serve as visual, public camping, designated trails, and other high public use areas.

A. Special Management Projects Include:

1. **Continued Development of the Certified Potomac-Garrett State Forest Sustainable Forest Management Plan** - with special focus on addressing items identified as in need of improvement as a result of the FSC/SFI Certification Audits.
2. **ESA Management Plan Development** – Forest management staff will begin to work with Natural Heritage staff to develop management plans for the 34+ ESA areas identified on the forest.
3. **Forest Stand Delineation, Inventory and Monitoring** – Extension of the 5- year project to re-inventory and redefine stands on the entire forest. With the initial effort to collect forest wide data completed and being utilized in all land planning efforts, inventory work will continue in the form of follow-up monitoring protocols associated with the initial inventory and certification requirements.

B. Land Management Projects Include:

-Continuation of the Watershed Protection Project mitigating impacts of the harmful forest pest carried out as: Hemlock Wooly Adelgid Mitigation / Red Spruce Restoration.

- Continuation of the Ecosystem Restoration Project involving control of invasive, exotic plants forest wide.

-1 Wildlife Habitat Project affecting approximately 1 ac. of forest land to improve habitat elements associated with a wildlife opening.

- 9 Silvicultural Projects including:

1 Intermediate Harvest on 28 acres, and

2 Regeneration Harvests on 54-acres of hardwood.

6 Noncommercial Silvicultural practices to promote regeneration and seedling establishment by controlling interfering, undesirable tall woody vegetation on 65 acres; and by controlling interfering and undesirable fern, grass and dewberry over 108 acres;

Forest harvest operations are undertaken to utilize mature and dead/dying/diseased trees; to thin overstocked stands; to improve and diversify wildlife habitat; to effectively correct public safety concerns and issues; to reduce the forests vulnerability to insect attack, disease or wildfire hazard; to facilitate certain approved research needs; to improve certain aesthetic aspects of an area; and to improve the proportions of age class and species diversity within stands and management blocks. This forest has been intensively managed for over 100 years, utilizing both even and uneven-aged techniques via selective removals and regeneration harvests. Early records indicate that as cut over land was acquired, foresters ‘culled’ the forest, removing the poorly formed and damaged timber left behind in the wake of the cut and run practices employed by

early timber speculators. By removing these undesirable trees, newly forming seedlings were released from competition and were thus cultured into the future growing stock of trees that we enjoy today. The benefits of this work have been significant including: improved wildlife habitat diversity, improved forest health and more abundant mast production, improved utilization of gypsy moth damaged trees, reduced forest fire hazard, and the considerable financial contribution of management to the State and local economies, as well as to those employed in the forest products industry.

Approximately 544,000 board feet of timber will be contracted for harvest in FY-18. This will involve 6 sales including the 3 sites and 82 acres as detailed in this AWP document and an additional 3 sites and 101 acres from previously approved work plans. The 544,000 board feet will put an estimated \$ 138,500 worth of raw wood products out into the local markets. Much of the silvicultural work laid out in this work plan is focused on initiating seedling development to better insure regeneration successes in future harvests. Much of the value of the harvests in the work plan will be directed back into the forest providing the essential investment in pre-harvest cultural work that will assure the long term sustainable management of these important forest resources.

The cultural operations and management projects outlined within the FY-18 Annual Work Plan are selected to provide significant contributions to sustainability of the forest resources found within the Potomac-Garrett State Forest and the ecosystems associated with it.

III. General Location Maps for FY-18 Land Management Proposals (Map Key)

Garrett State Forest Mapped Sites

Recreation Proposals

1. Maple Glade Road Resurface and Erosion Control

Wildlife Management Proposals

1. Comp. 41 Stand 8 (Wildlife Opening, Edge Cut)

Silvicultural Proposals

1. Comp. 32 Stand 8 (Commercial thinning)
2. Comp. 32 Stand 9 (Pre-harvest treatment of interfering veg.)
3. Comp. 32 Stand 18 (Clear-cut with variable retention, treatment of competing veg. & deer exclosure fence)
4. Comp. 33 Stand 2 (Pre-harvest treatment of competing veg.)
5. Comp. 39 Stand 12 (Pre-harvest treatment of competing veg.)
6. Comp. 39 Stand 13 (Over-story removal with residuals)
7. Comp. 41 Stand 8 (Pre-harvest treatment of competing veg, Balsam Fir & Red Spruce release)
8. Comp. 42 Stand 8 (Pre-harvest treatment of competing veg.)
9. Comp. 45 Stand 6 (Balsam Fir & Red Spruce ‘Crop Tree Release’)

Potomac State Forest Mapped Sites

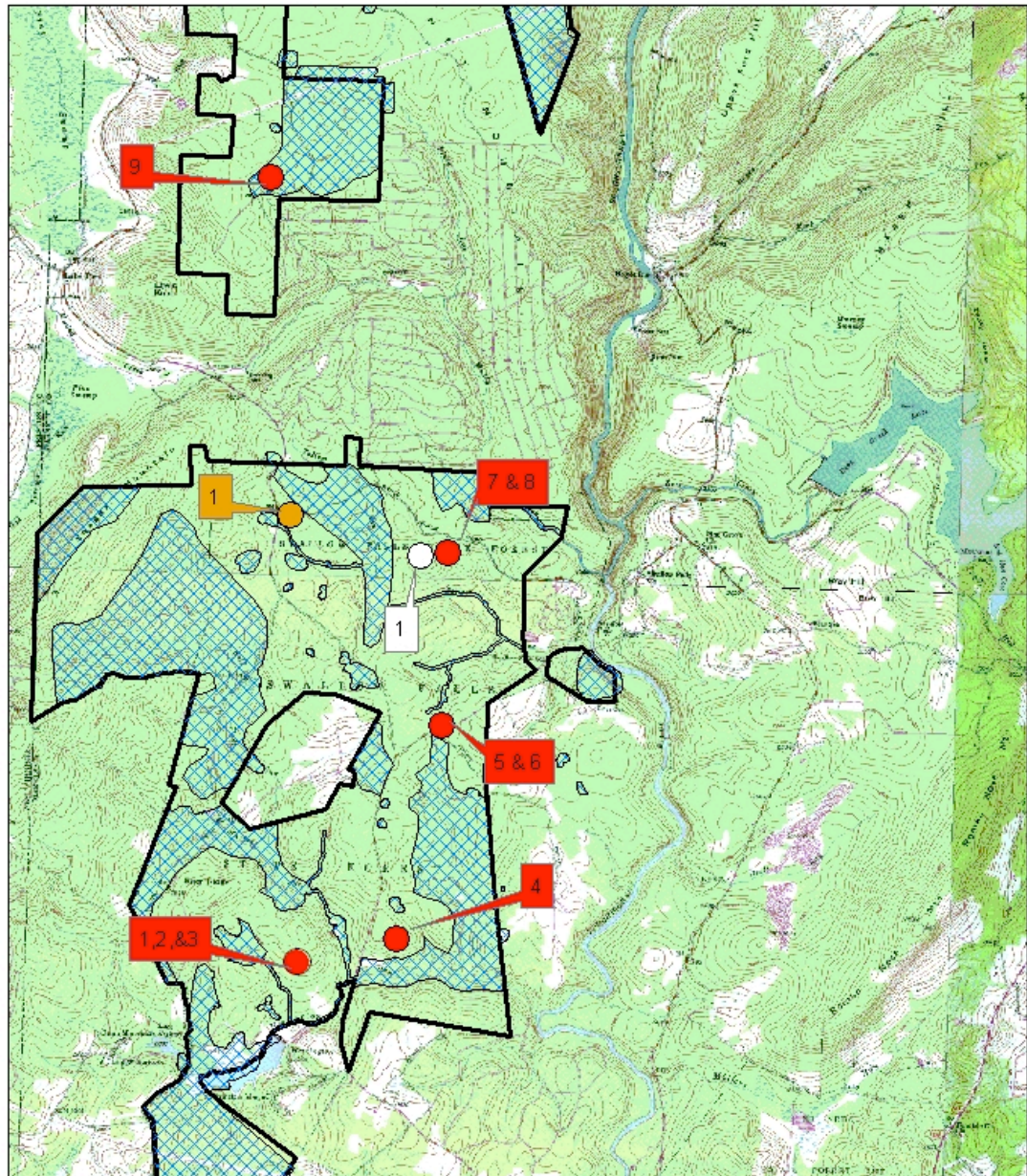
Recreation Proposals


1. CCC Camp Road-Trail Restoration


Watershed Protection

1. Comp. 19 – Lostland Run HWA Mitigation/Red Spruce Planting
Proposal (Extension FY-12 Proposal)


Potomac Garrett State Forest AWP-18 General Location Map



 High Conservation Value Forest (Total)

 = Recreation Proposals

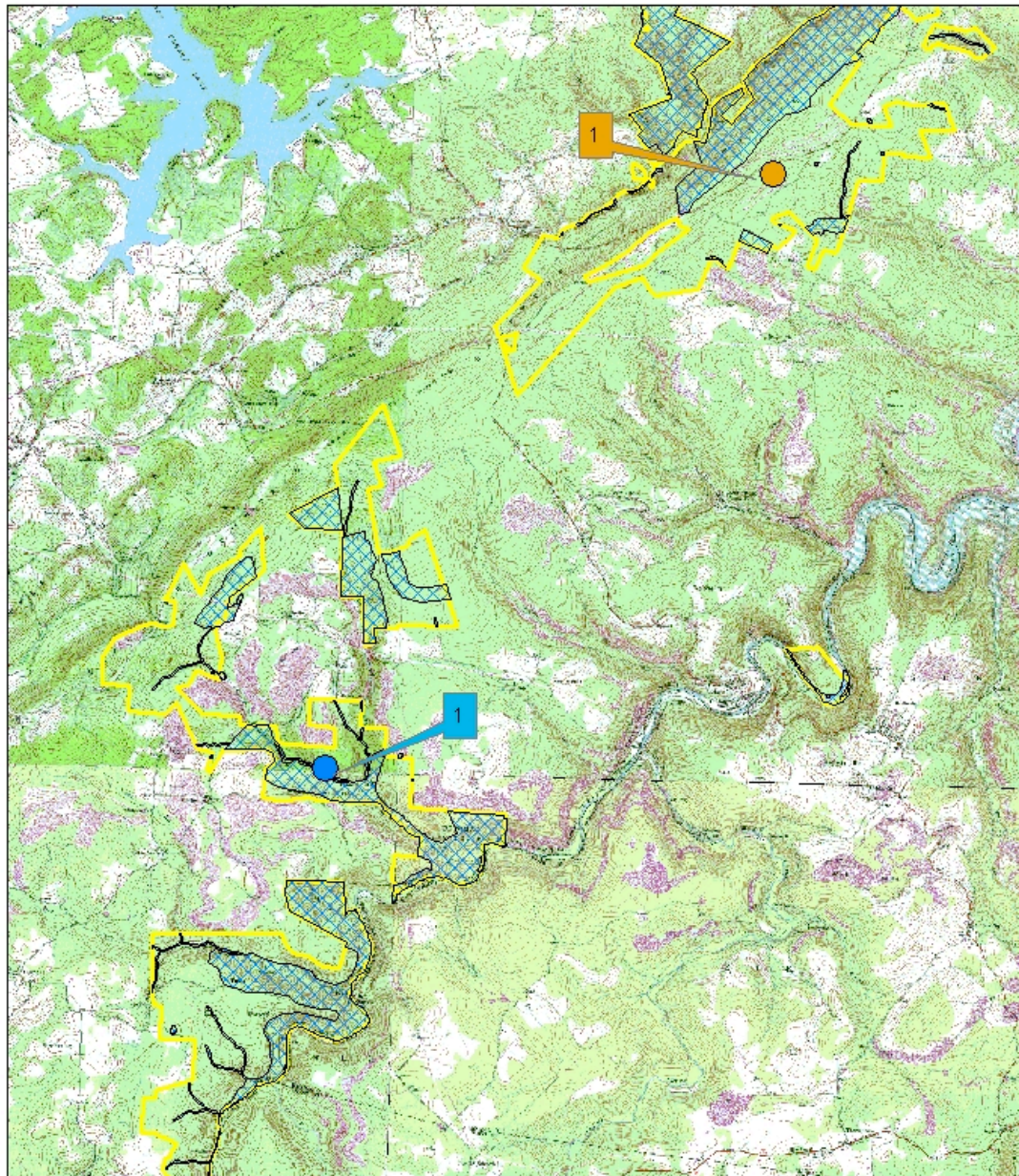
 = Wildlife Proposals

 = Silviculture Proposals


1:60,000




Potomac State Forest FY-18 General Location Map



 High Conservation Value Forest (Total)

 = Recreation Proposals

 = Watershed Protection

1:100,000



IV. Special Projects - Forest Resource Management and Planning

A. Continued Development of the Certified Potomac-Garrett State Forest Sustainable Forest Management Plan.

(This work is done with special focus on addressing items identified as in need of improvement as a result of 2016 FSC/SFI Certification Audits.)

Beginning in 2011, the Forest Service began revising the long term sustainable management plans for all three of the State Forests in the Western Region. The initial framework follows the sustainable management plan format established for the State of Maryland's Chesapeake Forest on the Eastern shore. The Department's goal is to have the updated sustainable forest management plans receive dual third party certification under both the Forest Stewardship Councils (FSC) and Sustainable Forestry Initiatives (SFI) standards and guidelines.

Throughout the course of the next two years, broad resource assessments were carried out identifying the various management units and features located on the forests including identification and mapping of High Conservation Value Forest Areas (HCVF), much of which was formerly identified as the State Forests "Special Management Zone". Within the HCVF are located a broad range of Ecologically Significant Areas (ESA). These areas typically contain rare, threatened or endangered species and their critical habitats. Management schemes for the ESAs on Potomac-Garrett State Forest will be developed in the winter of 2011. By spring of 2011 initial drafts of the Forest's Sustainable Management Plan were developed and shared with stakeholders for initial comment and review. The plans were submitted to both the FSC and SFI organizations in the spring of 2011, at which point audits have been completed on all three of the western State Forests. Following the audits, draft plans and audit findings were presented to the State Forests Citizen Advisory Committees for review and comments. The Draft Sustainable Management Plans were made available for public comment fall of 2011.

Each year the State Forests Management Program is audited for compliance to the standards set forth by the Certifying Organizations. Any shortcomings in the programs identified during the audits are identified in a Corrective Action Reports (CARs) and/or observations identified as being in need of improvement in order to be "certified" as sustainably managed forest lands under the internationally recognized FSC and SFI standards. These corrective actions vary from simple formal documentation of routine practices, to more complex policy and procedure development involving various stakeholders and partners. The program requires that all of these items be addressed before the next annual audit, with some needing more immediate attention. The 2016 audit turned up minor observations that are to be addressed by the next audit. (See Appendix 2 for brief summary of audit findings.) State Forest staff time and field operations are adjusted and redirected to assist in addressing these Corrective Action items in the course of the next year.

B. ESA Management Plan Development

Thirty-four Ecologically Significant Areas have been initially identified on PGSF. Each area harbors unique habitats and sensitive communities that generally contain RT&E species. These communities are in need of special conservation measures. In the winter of 2016, these areas are to have been reviewed with the region's Natural Heritage Biologist to develop site specific management plans to identify conservation measures appropriate for each ESA. This will be done in order that these significant features are not just assumed protected by steering direct management activity away from them, but rather actively identifying appropriate management practices that may increase the stability and long term existence of the communities and habitats that make up these ESAs. These ESA plans will be incorporated into the Potomac-Garrett State Forest Sustainable Forest Management Plan before the next audit cycle.

C. Forest Stand Delineation, Inventory and Monitoring

A critical part of developing long term sustainable management plans is the availability of up-to-date forest inventory data. To this end, the State Forests' staff has been fully engaged in revising the forest stand delineation on the forests. The process continues to consume considerable staff resources as this project is taking shape. This ambitious undertaking has involved collecting detailed inventory data on both overstory and understory conditions over the entire State Forest. The data has been collected and analyzed using the SILVA Inventory System developed by the USFS.

The project involves collecting information on some 22,200 sample points. As the data must be collected during full leaf out seasons between hard frost dates, the working window is five months. The work force of skilled technicians available to us are generally college students that can only offer us three months work before returning to school. To this end, the project was expected to take 4-5 years to complete and cost approx. \$20,000/yr. Our two full time technicians lead and manage this special project on top of their full work load implementing the Annual Work Plan on the forest. The stand delineation and inventory project has resulted in the pulling of one man from his normal duties for the equivalent of approximately six months time each year of the project to serve as crew leader, provide project planning and processing data. Staff assignments and field operations have been adjusted to assure the timely and accurate completion of this important field level assessment that will serve as the basis which we will draw management decisions from for the next 10-15 years.

With the close of the 5th inventory season in FY-16, initial data collection has been completed on this stage of the forest monitoring program and processing of this data has been completed; from which we continue to draw upon for management planning direction. The demand for this important data set is increasingly evident as special projects evolving out of demands placed by Forest Certification Standards utilize portions of this data set for project planning. Examples include the NNIS Inventory and Control Project in the ESAs on Potomac State Forest, as well as each years FY-Annual Work Plan.

What had historically been carried out on a 10-year interval, offering a ‘snap shot’ in time view of the forest, has evolved into a regular (annual) sampling approach that gives a more frequent look at overall forest condition throughout the years. This approach will allow a much closer watch on developing forest conditions and allows for a more rapid and timely response. This approach is especially valuable in light of the numerous and frequent introductions of foreign insects, diseases, and invasive plants that can rapidly disrupt forest systems. The initial ‘Stand Delineation and Inventory Project’ will be continued as a Forest Monitoring program as required under certification in order to allow for documented observations of changing conditions throughout the forest. Program focus will include: monitoring of developing regeneration sites allowing for the timely response to the investment in intensive silvicultural work such as herbicide control of invasive and interfering plants, fencing, and prescribed fire; NNIS monitoring and control work (beyond the special project area identified in this AWP below); silvicultural results with respect to management objectives and outcomes and recreation / visitor impacts, etc.

V. Maintenance and Operations

Aside from the detailed cultural work planned for the State Forests, the following is a partial list of projects that are often on-going from year to year and are an integral part of State Forest operations.

A. Maintenance and Management of Roads and Trails

PGSF staff maintains 72.9 miles of roads and multi-use trails. This work is ever on-going. A lack of sufficient road maintenance budget makes the upkeep of this road and trail system a considerable challenge. A reduction in ORV Permit revenue has left a considerable void in the routine maintenance budget of the State Forest. In FY-13 \$12,000 from ‘ORV Permit Funds’ was budgeted for maintenance to ORV trails and primitive roads on PGSF. In subsequent years, the limited ORV Permit Funds available were redirected toward new trail construction on Savage River State Forest. Preliminary projections for FY-18 ORV Funds for PGSF are also zero. In order to attempt to meet this challenge, alternative sources are continuously sought to provide the necessary equipment, labor and materials required for the routine maintenance and improvements needed to sustain this aging and primitive transportation system.

In FY-17/18 maintenance staff will concentrate on carrying out planned trail maintenance as outlined in the 3 National Recreation Trail Grants detailed in the Recreation Section of this plan. This will be carried out in addition to basic maintenance on the segments of multiple-use and motorized-use trails that have been rehabilitated using National Recreation Trail Grants over the past 5 years, along with routine maintenance of the roads and trails as outlined in the roads maintenance plan.

As a result of the State Forests Certification Audit, State Forest staff has developed a formalized transportation plan in which the entire transportation (road and trail) network has been inventoried and assessed for management, use, and maintenance needs. From this assessment, the State Forest Manager develops annual maintenance plans geared toward making

the road and trail system sustainable. Information gathered for this plan is presently being used to prioritize improvements to be made with the access trails grant referenced above, NRT Grant funds, Critical Maintenance Projects, etc. As work is contracted out, plans will be updated with regard to needs.

The 72.9 miles of roads and multi-use trails are classified by the desired use and condition and are broken down as follows:

17 miles of Class 1 – Year round, permanent, public vehicle access, high traffic areas (non primitive).

General description of these roads is an un-gated, hardened (stone surfaced) access road, with primary drainage provided by use of in-sloping, out-sloping, crowning, ditches, and culvert pipes. Road is designed to accommodate four season traffic.

These roads provide primary access to State Forest recreational-use areas, primarily camping areas and adjacent State parks.

4.4 miles of Class 2 – Year round, permanent, public vehicle access, low traffic areas (primitive).

General description of these roads is an un-gated, hardened (stone surfaced) access road, with primary drainage provided by use of in-sloping, out-sloping, crowning, ditches, and culvert pipes and ***broad based dips***. Road is designed to accommodate four season traffic.

These roads provide year round access to State Forest Areas other than camping areas. The primary difference between class 1 and class 2 roads is the standard at which the traveled surface is maintained. Class 2 roads will use the surface shaping as well as broad based dips, etc., to manage storm flows with ditches and culverts used to handle intermittent and perennial stream flow.

7.9 miles of Class 3 – Seasonal, gated, public vehicle access, low traffic areas (primitive).

General description of these roads is a gated, hardened (stone surfaced) access road, with primary drainage provided by use of in-sloping, out-sloping, crowning, ditches, and culvert pipes and ***broad based dips***. Roads are designed to accommodate four season traffic, but are only periodically opened to allow for seasonal access.

These roads are seasonally opened to provide hunting access to remote areas of the State Forest. Class 3 roads can include Handicapped Hunter Access Roads, as well as other roads that are opened to encourage hunter access.

These roads provide gate controlled seasonal access to State Forest areas. The primary difference between Class 2 and Class 3 roads is the gated access that is used to control the seasonal access. Class 3 roads will use the surface shaping as well as, broad based dips etc, to manage storm flows with ditches and culverts used to handle intermittent and perennial stream flow.

22.2 miles of Class 4 – Gated, service vehicle road (primitive).

General description of these roads is a gated, non-hardened access road, with primary drainage provided by use of in-sloping, out-sloping, crowning, broad based dips and ‘water breakers’ with minimal ditches, and culvert pipes. Road surface varies based on prior use and present needs; but may vary from minimal stone, to ‘seeded to game food’ to natural herbaceous cover. Roads are designed to accommodate minimal 3 season traffic, and are used by agency staff to carry out work on the forest.

These roads provide gate controlled service access to State Forest areas. The primary difference between Class 3 and Class 4 roads is the surface condition and durability.

Class 4 roads will use the surface shaping as well as, broad based dips etc, to manage storm flows with ditches and culverts used to handle intermittent and perennial stream flow.

Mileage no longer tracked -Class 5 – Temporary/Retired

General description of these roads is a temporary access road, that will be closed to any vehicle access as it no longer serves a State Forest management needs, or roads that may have been retired to provide important sensitive resource protection. These roads have been abandoned after having been “put to sleep” or stabilized to prevent erosion and sedimentation. Road surface varies based on prior use and may vary from minimal stone to reverting to natural herbaceous cover.

These former roads are open to foot traffic only and in many cases may serve as a conduit for hunters or other backcountry users to gain access into remote forested areas. The primary difference between Class 4 and Class 5 roads is the lack of further maintenance on the abandoned Class 5 roads.

As Class 5 roads are abandoned, there is no need to retain them on inventory.

Class 6 - Special use – Paved surfaces

Includes parking lots and driveway surfaces at the State Forest Headquarters (Office, shop and maintenance compound and paved pavilion areas.)

21.4 miles of Hiking Trails –Year round non-motorized use trails. These designated hiking / and non-motorized use trails and generally include a larger component of ‘single track’, natural surface trail bed. Certain trails are designated ‘foot traffic only’ due to the sensitive nature of their locations.

B. Boundary Line Maintenance

PGSF has 130 miles of boundary line, including interior lines, exterior lines, and road frontage. Boundary maintenance is critical to the management of all public lands. In order to keep up with this effort, PGSF maintains approximately 30 miles of line each year. In addition to routine marking/painting, considerable effort is spent on researching relocating or establishing missing and/or new line, as well as addressing boundary conflicts. As conflicts arise, every effort is made to resolve the issue in a timely and professional manner. Often, this work leads to

the need for a licensed surveyor and legal recourse in order to resolve the issue. Boundary work in FY-18 will focus on routine maintenance of located boundary lines.

C. Campground Operation and Maintenance

PGSF offers year round, primitive camping in five separate areas of the State Forest; Lostland Run Area, Laurel Run/Wallman Areas, Snaggy Mt. Area and Piney Mt. Area. Within each area is a 'group site', a rustic trail shelter and several primitive campsites offering a picnic table, lantern post/table and fire ring. From 2003-2009, vault toilets were installed in each of the five areas to improve sanitary conditions for campers and forest visitors. Campsites and trail shelters are available on a first-come, first-served basis. A self-registration kiosk is available at the entrance to each area. Additional seasonal staff is hired to operate and maintain the campgrounds during peak summer use to provide a quality camping experience.

Maintenance and operation of these primitive campsites includes: managing group site reservations; maintenance of information / bulletin boards; camper contacts to insure policies are understood; self registration fee collections and deposits; weekly site inspection and cleaning; hazardous tree evaluation and removals; grass mowing (typically the week before the summer holidays and otherwise as needed); maintenance and replacement of picnic tables, lantern posts, and fire rings; site impact monitoring.

D. 3-D Archery Range Maintenance and Management

PGSF offers the only 3-D Archery Range in the State's Public Lands System. The facility is located behind the State Forest Headquarters. The range offers a 30-target course, with four separate skill levels at each target. The facility is open April 1st - Oct. 1st, dawn to dusk.

Maintenance and operation of this facility includes: promotion of the facility; maintenance of information / bulletin boards; weekly inspection and cleaning; periodic maintenance and replacement of targets; hazardous tree evaluation and removals; brush removal as needed; site impact monitoring, annual overhaul and patching of targets; seasonal set up and take down for the off season.

E. Interpretation and Education

With limited staffing resources, interpretive efforts have been focused on Sustainable Forest Management Programs for targeted audiences using the interpretive features at the "Kindness Demonstration Area". Targeted audiences have been Agricultural and Natural Resource Leaders, Extension Service, Forestry Boards, forest land owners, and forest land managers. The facility is set up as a self-guided lesson in forestry and wildlife management practices, and is available to groups and individuals wishing to learn more about managing forests.

VI. Recreation Proposals

A. National Recreation Trails Grant Requests

Potomac-Garrett State Forest has submitted three National Recreation Trails Grant Requests to fund enhancements to various recreation trails on the forests.

1. CCC Camp Road – Trail Restoration - \$37,715

(\$30,000 Requested Grant funds with \$7,715 matching funds for ‘in kind’ services)

This project will involve resurfacing 1.2 miles of the 8.5 mile long Backbone Mountain ORV Trail. More specifically, this work will focus on the section of trail known as the CCC Camp Road. Work will include resurfacing and top dressing the gravel surface with compacted crushed stone to restore proper drainage and sufficiently harden the traveled surface of the CCC Camp Road / ORV Trail. This work will restore access to this section of trail that has been closed for several years due to collapsed culverts. The work will stabilize the trail surface and reduce erosion and sediment loading to adjacent streams. This segment of trail is part of the 8.5 mile Backbone Mtn. ORV Trail, which is part of the greater 28.3 mile ORV trail network on the state forest. For the safety of trail users and the contractors carrying out the work, during the harvest, the effected sections of the trail will be posted and closed, with visitors being redirected to other trails in the area. Notice will be posted at affected trail heads as well as on the MD Forest Service website and the State Forest web page.

2. Maple Glade Road - Trail Resurface and Erosion Control - \$37,805

(\$30,000 Requested Grant funds with \$7,805 matching funds for ‘in kind’ services)

This project will involve maintenance and restoration of an existing multi-use trail network and will include sediment and erosion control abatement through restoration of proper drainage to the 1.8 mile section of Maple Glade Access / Multiple Use Trail. Work will involve replacement of several failing culvert pipes carrying storm water and live water courses, as well as grading and surface drainage corrections.

This project benefits the recreational *users* of the Garrett State forest by first improving motorized access to a variety of recreational resources including: trail head access to 3 separate non motorized trails, (Toliver Trail, 5 1/2 Mile Trail, and Fisherman's Trail), trout fishermen's access to the Muddy Creek stream, Handicapped Hunter Access, as well as alternative access to the popular Swallow Falls State Park. More importantly, this project will improve the water quality of both Toliver Run and Muddy Creek, both of which drain to the Youghiogheny River; all of which are trout waters. Water quality will be improved by reducing sediment loading associated with this failing and unstable graveled access trail bed.

3. Potomac/Garrett Trail Maintenance Labor - \$37,500

(\$30,000 Requested Grant funds with \$7,500 matching funds for ‘in kind’ services)

This project will support contractual staff for maintenance and operation of the 80+ miles of recreation trails at Potomac-Garrett State Forest. The PGSF trail system is designated for multiple recreational activities, including hiking, mountain biking and hunting access. Potomac-Garrett State Forest is a heavily visited recreational destination for people from Baltimore and Washington, DC areas and draws approximately 47,088 visitors annually. Many of these outdoor enthusiasts visit PGSF to enjoy its hiking trails, mountain bike trails, motorized forest roads and overlooks. All sites are accessible and impacted by motorized vehicles and people. This project benefits the recreational trail user by keeping the existing public recreation resources on the forest functional, safe, sustainable, clean and beautiful.

This project requires no additional planning or design. All environmentally sensitive areas are identified and accounted for. The project enhances tourism/economic development opportunities within Garrett County. For the safety of trail users and the staff carrying out the work, the effected sections of the trail will be posted and closed, with visitors being redirected to other trails in the area. Notice will be posted at affected trail heads as well as on the MD Forest Service website and the State Forest web page.